

REMARKS

This is a Response to the Final Office Action mailed September 3, 2004.

Applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 3, 5, 7-14, and 18-24. Applicant respectfully submits however that each of claims 1, 4, 6 and 15-17 also patentably distinguishes over the art of record.

In paragraph 2 of the Office Action, it is asserted that new grounds of rejection were necessitated by Applicant's amendment. On page 6 of the Office Action, the Action is made Final because of this amendment. Applicant respectfully submits that the Action should not have been made Final, because the limitations presented in claim 1 were present in the original wording of the claim. As stated in the previous Response, claim 1 was amended to improve the idiomatic use of English. The limitation that the "postal matter sorting machine ... indicates a number of unprocessed mail items received and assigned to said postal information input apparatus" was present in the original wording of the claim, which originally stated that the "postal matter sorting machine ... displays an unprocessed number in said postal information input apparatus." The term "unprocessed number" is the "number of unprocessed mail items received and assigned." Applicant respectfully submits that the Examiner's new ground of rejection was not necessitated by Applicant's amendment, and therefore should not have been made Final.

In paragraph 3 of the Office Action, claims 1, 4, 6 and 15-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,632,252 to Haruki et al. (Haruki) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,509,976 to Law, Jr. et al. (Law). The Examiner's rejection on this ground is respectfully traversed.

Among the limitations of claim 1 which are neither disclosed nor suggested in the art of record is the requirement that the display "indicates a number of unprocessed mail items received and assigned to said postal information input apparatus." As admitted in

the Office Action, Haruki is silent about a “number of unprocessed mail items received and assigned to said postal information input apparatus.” The Office Action has combined Haruki with Law to read on this limitation of claim 1. Applicant respectfully submits that Law fails to cure this deficiency of Haruki.

Law discloses a system that generates a report regarding value added taxes and fees from data obtained from indicia on mail pieces. The Office Action has cited Law at col. 6, lines 48-65 as teaching that its system indicates “a number of unprocessed mail items received and assigned.” Applicant respectfully disagrees that this portion of Law teaches this limitation of claim 1. In the cited portion of Law, the system is beginning to process data associated with mail pieces in order to generate the value added tax report. At this stage in the process, all the mail items are unprocessed by the system. More specifically, as illustrated in step 446 of Fig. 7, Law’s system locates the next unprocessed mail piece record from database 56. In this portion of Law’s process, cited by the Office Action, an identifying “mail piece number record” is determined, not a quantity of unprocessed mail items. This number record is not indicated to the operator, but even if it was displayed, it is not the information required by claim 1.

Later on in Law’s process, its system attempts to automatically compare the meter mail piece number with a postal mail piece number to check that they agree. See col. 7, lines 6-10. If a match cannot be found, Law’s system stores the mail piece numbers in an error database. Col. 7, lines 14-16. At that point, Law states that “[a]n operator may review the records contained in data base 452 and attempt to reconstruct the data fields to remove the errors.” Col. 7, lines 16-18. This point in Law’s process is more analogous to the present invention than the portion cited by the Examiner, because operator intervention is necessary to correct errors in information recognized during an automated process, rather than at the start of it. However, Law offers no further teachings than the prior art reference Haruki regarding indications that aid an operator correcting such errors. Law is silent as to how the operator should remove such errors. Therefore, Law does not teach or suggest indicating “a number of unprocessed mail items received and assigned to

[a] postal information input apparatus.” Accordingly, even if Law and Haruki were combined, the combination does not teach or suggest this feature. In the absence of any disclosure or suggestion of this feature of the invention, claim 1 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Furthermore, a postal matter sortation system that scans mail items and recognizes indicia on the mail item in order to sort mail items completely differs from a report generating system that uses unique mail piece numbers to generate reports concerning value added taxes and fees. Notably, Law does not provide any teachings or suggestions with respect to errors in optical character recognition of indicia on mail pieces, and the rectification of such errors through operator input on a postal information input apparatus. See Law at col. 4, lines 20-27. Accordingly, even though there exists the teaching of optical character recognition with respect to determining unique mail piece numbers, one of skill in the art would have absolutely no motivation to combine the teachings of a value added tax report generating system with those of a postal matter sortation system because each of these systems differ completely in function and operation. In view of the above, one of skill in the art would have no desire or motivation to combine the teachings of Law with Haruki because Law does not concern sorting mail pieces. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 patentably distinguishes over the art of record.

Among the limitations of independent claim 15 which are neither disclosed nor suggested in the art of record is the requirement that the data display method provides an “indication of the number of rejected mail items associated with the information received by the input apparatus requiring operator input.” As argued above, because Haruki and Law fail to teach or suggest providing an indication of the quantity of rejected mail items to the operator, and because one of skill in the art would not be motivated to combine the teachings of Haruki and Law, claim 15 is also believed to be in condition for allowance.

Claims 4, 6, 16 and 17 depend from claims 1 and 15 respectively, and include all the limitations found therein. These claims include further limitations which, in

combination with the limitations of claims 1 and 15, are neither disclosed nor suggested in the art of record.

Claim 4 requires that the first display is an icon display, that indicates data has been received from the postal matter sorting machine and requires operator attention. Haruki does not disclose an icon display. The cited portion of Haruki (col. 3, lines 8-24) teaches or suggests that the mail piece can be scanned and recognized, but does not provide any teachings or suggestions concerning a type of indication for unrecognized mail pieces.

Claim 6 requires that a display deletion means removes the processed item from the display when the operator enters data within a predetermined time. The cited portion of Haruki (col. 6, lines 61 to col. 7, line 6) teaches that steps are deleted from Haruki's control processing algorithm, but does not provide a teaching or suggestion of removing processed items from the operator's display. Similarly, claim 16 deletes a first indication ("that information associated with the rejected mail item has been received by the input apparatus and requires operator input") after the operator provides input. The cited portion of Haruki teaches that rejected data "is deleted from [the] corresponding file unit (22a)," but does not provide any teachings or suggestions of deleting an indication from the operator's display.

Regarding claim 17, the cited portion of Haruki (col. 5, line 65 to col. 6, line 9) teaches or suggests updating a control table, but does not provide any teachings or suggestions of updating a second indication ("of the number of rejected mail items associated with the information received by the input apparatus requiring operator input") after the operator has provided such input. Accordingly, these claims are believed to be patentable over the cited art of record.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of the application and allowance of all the claims are earnestly solicited.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

Robert G. Gingher

Registration No.: 45,753

DICKSTEIN SHAPIRO MORIN &
OSHINSKY LLP

1177 Avenue of the Americas

41st Floor

New York, New York 10036-2714

(212) 835-1400

Attorney for Applicant